97-84001-5

Bralley, Francis Marion

The rural life situation in Texas

[Texas]

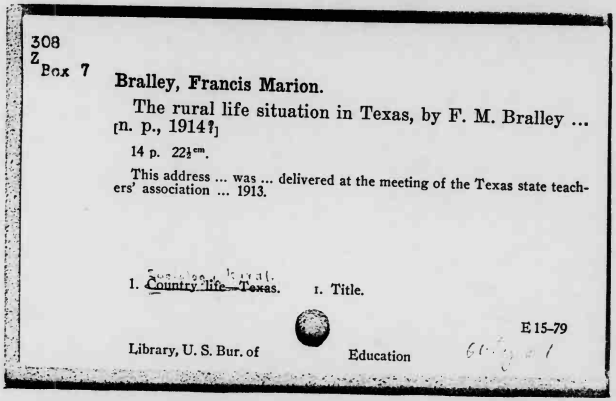
[1914?]

97-84001-5
MASTER NEGATIVE #

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES
PRESERVATION DIVISION

BIBLIOGRAPHIC MICROFORM TARGET

ORIGINAL MATERIAL AS FILMED - EXISTING BIBLIOGRAPHIC RECORD



308
Z
Box 7

Bralley, Francis Marion.

The rural life situation in Texas, by F. M. Bralley ... [n. p., 1914?]

14 p. 22½cm.

This address ... was ... delivered at the meeting of the Texas state teachers' association ... 1913.

1. Country life—Texas. I. Title.

Library, U. S. Bur. of Education

E 15-79

RESTRICTIONS ON USE: *Reproductions may not be made without permission from Columbia University Libraries.*

TECHNICAL MICROFORM DATA

FILM SIZE: 35mm REDUCTION RATIO: 11:1 IMAGE PLACEMENT: IA (IIA) IB IIB

DATE FILMED: 1-13-97 INITIALS: PB.

TRACKING # : 20075

FILMED BY PRESERVATION RESOURCES, BETHLEHEM, PA.

BIBLIOGRAPHIC IRREGULARITIES

MAIN ENTRY: Bralley, Francis Marion

The rural life situation in Texas

Bibliographic Irregularities in the Original Document:

List all volumes and pages affected; include name of institution if filming borrowed text.

_____Page(s) missing/not available:_____

_____Volume(s) missing/not available:_____

_____Illegible and/or damaged page(s):_____

_____

_____Page(s) or volume(s) misnumbered:_____

_____Bound out of sequence:_____

_____Page(s) or volume(s) filmed from copy borrowed from:_____

_____

X Other: pagination begins with page [3]

_____

_____

_____Inserted material:_____

TRACKING#: MSH20075

Prof. J. McK. Cattell

560-814-15m-6248

The Rural Life Situation in Texas

308
Z
Box 7

BY

F. M. BRALLEY

DIRECTOR DEPARTMENT OF EXTENSION

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS

This address, which was delivered at the meeting of the Texas State Teachers' Association which was held in Dallas, November 27, 28 and 29, 1913, was indorsed unanimously by a rising vote with the request by the Association that it be printed for general distribution among the people of Texas.

THE RURAL LIFE SITUATION IN TEXAS

BY F. M. BRALLEY, DIRECTOR DEPARTMENT OF EXTENSION, THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS

Every student of social and economic problems in Texas, every intelligent, well-informed, patriotic citizen of the State, realizes that country life in Texas is both unprofitable and unsatisfactory. The fact that the urban population is increasing more rapidly than the rural population of the State, is conclusive evidence that country life fails to meet the demands of ambitious, progressive citizenship; and this fact should constitute an appeal for a thorough investigation to those citizens of the State who are interested in conserving the highest and most enduring interests of Texas.

RURAL POPULATION AND LAND OWNERSHIP

According to the Federal Census of 1900, 77.7 per cent of our population was strictly rural, and only 22.3 per cent urban; while the census of 1910 shows 30.7 per cent of our population is urban, and only 69.3 per cent rural. The population of the State at large increased from 1900 to 1910, 17.8 per cent; yet there was an actual decrease in the rural population of 42 counties of the State, the per cent of decrease ranging from 1.1 per cent to 27.7 per cent. When large, rich, agricultural counties, such as Lamar, Grayson, Fannin, Cooke, Collin, Hunt, Bell, Johnson, Washington, Robertson, and others show a marked decrease in rural population, it at least suggests that something is wrong with the rural situation in Texas.

In the State there are 417,770 farms, with an average of 269.1 acres, each valued at the average price of $14.53 per acre. This makes each farm worth $5,311, and all of the farms worth a total of $2,218,645,164. If these farms were owned by the people who cultivate them, and the social, religious, and educational opportunities were as good as those of the city, we would have an ideal country, whose happiness, contentment, and prosperity would continue through successive generations. However, such is not the case; a majority of the rich, agricultural farms of Texas are operated by tenants, and we are rapidly developing a farm peasantry, which is contrary to every principle of American

Democracy and violative of the spirit of American institutions.

Of the 417,770 farms, 219,575 of them, or 52.6 per cent, are operated by tenants, which means that a majority of our farmers are to-day homeless; while tenancy in the following big counties of the State has reached the high mark indicated: in Fannin County 67 per cent of the farms are operated by tenants; in Grayson County, 62.6 per cent; in Hunt County, 67.5 per cent; in Collin County, 68.8 per cent; in Ellis County, 69 per cent. The percentage of farms in Texas operated by owners and managers and by tenants is indicated by the following statistics:

	1880	1890	1900	1910
Owners and managers	62.4	58.1	50.3	47.4
Tenants	37.6	41.9	49.7	52.6

Not only is tenancy of farm lands on the rapid and dangerous increase in this State, but according to the 1910 census 33 1-3 per cent of the farms that were operated by owners were mortgaged for 25.5 per cent of their value, or for $76,089,272.

Unless the social and economic forces of the country can be organized and directed for betterment, it is apparent to every thoughtful citizen that a crisis will be reached in rural life within the next few decades which will threaten the very foundation of our government. Thomas Nixon Carver has well said: "Next to war, pestilence, and famine, the worst thing that can happen to a rural community is absentee landlordism." War, pestilence, and famine do their destructive work in a hurry, and some times in cyclonic fashion; but absentee landlordism works more slowly, but none the less surely, in destroying the happiness and the prosperity of the people, and in bringing ruin and desolation to the country.

Our farms are producing greater crops than ever before, but the prices of farm products are not satisfactory. There is a lack of intelligent, business-like organization among the people who till the soil for arresting the increase of tenancy, for redirecting and enriching country life, for marketing and distributing agricultural products, for protecting rural credit, and for establishing farm finance on a scientific basis.

David Franklin Houston, Secretary of Agriculture for the United States, has wisely said: "If the people of the city do not co-operate with the people of the country to

make rural life worth while and efficient, they will have to leave the city and go to farming themselves in order to obtain the necessities of life." Hence the problems of country life are the problems of the whole people; and when these problems are solved, their solution will contribute mightily to the solution of the problems of the cities.

This state and the nation owe a debt of gratitude to the Farmers' Educational and Co-Operative Union for doing pioneer work in the great movement for rehabilitating the farm and for wise and capable leadership through which the problems of farm life will find solution. Help in the big tasks is now being offered from various sources, and the University, as the friend of the farmer, wishes to do its share.

The state and national governments for more than a quarter of a century have been promoting the scientific study of agriculture, with the view to increasing the quality and the quantity of the yield of the staple crops of the farm. The object in a measure has been attained; but the great questions involved in the marketing and the distribution of our agricultural products have not been solved. Secretary of Agriculture Houston has declared the marketing of agricultural products to be the foremost agricultural question of the day; and has effected a "Rural Organization Service" in the United States Department of Agriculture, a part of the duties of which will be "to acquire and diffuse among the people of the United States useful information on subjects connected with the marketing and the distributing of farm products." The Department of Extension of the University of Texas, through its Division of Public Welfare, has undertaken the task of co-operating with the Federal Government, and desires to co-operate with the Farmers' Union in the matter of acquiring accurate and scientific information on the subjects of marketing and distributing the products of the farm; of rural credit and farm finance; and of making a profound study of said subjects, with a view to solving some of these big problems. The work is being undertaken along broad lines; and the results arrived at, when accepted and acted upon by the country at large, will be sound, stable, and enduring. Mr. Houston's interview in the Dallas News of May 25, 1913, evinces a comprehensive grasp of the rural life situation, and stamps him as a big man among the leaders of the nation.

The University of Texas in its School of Economics is instructing each year a large number of young men in the

great economic problems affecting both the rural and the urban life of the state and the nation; and the Division of Correspondence Instruction of the Department of Extension is giving a number of courses which deal scientifically with the subject of rural economics.

The greatest need at this time is reliable information, in convenient form, of what has been undertaken and accomplished in this and other countries along the particular line of work, and a thorough knowledge of existing conditions and facilities in this country, from a study of which information a practical and scientific plan of organization and co-operation for marketing and distributing farm products may be deduced. This great question should, and must, be approached from the point of view of the disinterested, scientific investigator, if results of permanent value are to be achieved. The farmers receive only 46.1 cents for what the consumer pays $1, and are deeply interested in, and will welcome the results of, such a study.

THE HOME A VITAL INSTITUTION IN CIVILIZATION

While considering the material side of country life we must not forget that material prosperity cannot be made permanent among any people for whose social, spiritual, and intellectual wants provision is not made. In fact, the lack of opportunities along these lines in the open country accounts in large measure for the drift of people to the city. The three institutions, permanent in our civilization and vital to the well-being of the people, and to which attention must be directed in order that country life shall be made more effective and worth while, are: the country home, the country church, and the country school. As accessories to these institutions, of course, should be mentioned the services rendered by the telephone, the rural mail delivery, the parcels post, the automobile, and good roads.

It should be the ambition of every normal man to be the head of a family and the owner of a home, and of every normal womanly woman to preside as queen in a home; and any business which produces 85 per cent of the wealth of the state, as agriculture does, should be so organized and financed as to encourage and enable the producers to become home-owners. The larger the per cent of the people who own their own homes, the greater the probabilities of happiness, contentment, and prosperity. A migratory people as a rule are thriftless, and thriftless people as a rule are lacking

in patriotism and love of country. It is illogical to expect the tenant, a temporary resident of the community, to invest much time, labor, or money in improving the public roads, in building modern schoolhouses, or in establishing on a firmer, more permanent basis the community church.

The home is a place of busy activity and labor, as well as of sacredness and rest; and the country home should be provided with all the comforts, the conveniences, and the labor-saving devices known to the modern home of the town or city. There is not one country home out of ten in Texas which was planned and constructed with a view to conserving the energy of the women by whom it is occupied, and to providing for their comfort and pleasure. The country home as a rule is defective in its heating and ventilation, void of sewerage, without a running water system, and lacking the labor-saving devices, which every good woman has a right to expect in her home, and which the health of the mother and the other members of the family require. Malaria, hookworm, typhoid fever, and other preventable diseases flourish in unsanitary environment. There should be co-operation on the part of the city, the county, the state, and the national governments in safe-guarding the health of people and in reducing to the minimum sickness from preventable diseases.

With the more scientific cultivation of the soil has come improved farm machinery, and other means of making easier the arduous tasks of the men on the farm; but the farm women are working to-day under practically the same disadvantages, the same difficulties, the same hardships, and the same heart-rending conditions which the farm women of forty years ago had to endure. Much has been done and said in recent years for the conservation of the soil; but little has been said, and less has been done, for the conservation of the women on the farm. No wonder the women of the open country are anxious to leave the old country home for the artificial life of the town and the city.

The University of Texas realizes its obligation to the home-makers of the State, and has not only established one of the best Schools of Domestic Economy in the South, which is housed in one of the eight famous one-story, wooden shacks on the campus, in which several hundred young women students are pursuing courses in home economics, but it has also established in the Department of Extension the Division of Home Welfare, in which two of

the best trained and most competent women in the country are devoting their entire time to writing bulletins on various phases of home welfare, and to delivering lectures and giving demonstrations at fairs, county educational rallies, women's organizations, and other public gatherings. Accurate and scientific information through this medium is being furnished to the people of the State on such subjects as the planning and building of the home, its sanitation, decoration, and furnishing; labor-saving devices in the home, and what they mean to the home-maker; the proper selection, preparation, and preservation of foods; the planning of the family menu; the study of clothing, which includes the study of textiles and tests of their durability; and the cutting, fitting, and making of garments. All of the economic, hygienic, and aesthetic aspects of these different phases of the home are being presented to the people throughout the State; and in addition to this work courses in correspondence instruction are being offered by mail, and also through the press of the State, to a large number of people.

THE CHURCH A FACTOR IN RURAL LIFE

The church as an institution is fundamental to happy and successful lives. The country church, however, is not as prosperous an institution as it should be. Most country churches have their ministers with them only once or twice per month, and as a logical result the real value of the country church in the enrichment of country life is not more than one-half what it should be. The country church concerns itself more in the annual revival, or the annual gathering in of new members, than it does in building up the lives of its people by making them more efficient, useful citizens.

The church is a social as well as a spiritual institution; and it should, through its various departments, participate in an effective way in the social activities of the people. In its work it should co-operate with the home and the school, but should not undertake to dominate either. Frequently there are found too many different church buildings of inferior grade in one community. Such a policy is an economic waste; and results in poor preachers being poorly paid, and a consequent lack of interest and of effective organization for work. There should, therefore, be co-operation in purposes, in plans, and in work among the country churches of this State. There are duties of greater value and of more importance to be performed by the

ministry of Texas than those of conducting biblical disputes and theological debates, which generally result in creating unfortunate divisions among the people of the community, in making factions in the schools, and in alienating friends.

The country church should manifest a deep concern and a genuine interest in the agricultural welfare of the country people. There is a logical relation between the religion of Jesus Christ and good agricultural practice; and the church will certainly prosper just in proportion as the right kind of living and the right kind of education are made to share largely in the lives of the people. The Man of Galilee was a rural-life preacher, and frequently referred to the "lost sheep,", the "shepherd," the "sower," the "tares," the "sheaves," the "carpenter shop," "good and poor soil," and never failed to enlist the interest, hold the attention, and build up the lives of the people. With the elimination of the small, acrimonious things which frequently arouse antagonism among different church organizations, and with the realization of the great opportunities for helpful service by the church along economic, spiritual, and educational lines, it will become a tremendous factor in redirecting country life, and in building up a citizenship contented in their homes, happy in their spiritual lives, and intensely interested in the economic and educational welfare of the country. In the language of Thomas Nixon Carver: "The key to the solution of the problem of country life is possessed by the country church, for the colleges can produce the body of knowledge needed by the farmer in his struggle to survive as a farmer, but the country church alone can produce the spirit in which this body of knowledge shall be used."

THE COUNTRY SCHOOL IN ITS WORK SHOULD BE CORRELATED WITH OTHER FACTORS

The destiny of the State of Texas is in the hands of the people who reside in the open country, because they constitute approximately 70 per cent of our population. They produce 85 per cent of the wealth of Texas, they perform much of the exacting labor, but the educational facilities as provided by the common public schools in the rural districts are not as good as those provided for the children of the towns and the cities. The school is one of the permanent institutions of our civilization. Its highest object will never be attained until its work has been correlated with its environment, including particularly the social aspects and

economic needs of the home, the predominating agricultural and industrial interests of the community, and the altruistic and non-sectarian activities of the church.

In attempting the solution of rural life problems the mistake that has heretofore been made by some persons of narrow vision, but doubtless of good intentions, is the consideration of the agricultural and the industrial interests apart from the interests of the home, of the church, and of the school. Or they have attempted to solve the problem of better schools for the country children without taking into account the other three factors. There are four fundamental factors which must always be taken into account in any profound study of the public welfare, with a view to creating conditions that will be at the same time satisfying and permanent, to-wit: the economic, the social, the spiritual, and the educational opportunities and facilities of the people. The public school is the one institution of the country in which every citizen has a proprietary right; it is the common property of all, and hence it is the most logical and suitable point at which all the people should come together on the same footing and effect organization for the public welfare. There should be a wider use of the schoolhouse in Texas. Business and social organizations of the people should be effected at hundreds of schoolhouses in the rural districts of the State.

In the organization and administration of the country public schools of Texas there are difficulties encountered which do not attach to the organization and administration of the public schools in the towns and the cities. Each of our counties is divided into a large number of districts, and in all sections of the State except the western most of the districts are too small, resulting in an inadequate basis for local taxation; in too few children for efficient organization; in desultory, unsatisfactory supervision; in insufficient financial support; in cheap, unsatisfactory schoolhouses; in little or no equipment; and in the financial inability to procure teachers of standard qualifications and efficiency. The one-teacher school has always been a necessity, and in certain parts of the State the one-teacher school will always be a necessity. But whenever it is practical to supplant the one-teacher school with a two-teacher school, a three-teacher school, or a rural high-school, it should be done in the interest of business economy and educational efficiency.

There are 8,500 country schools in Texas: 6,500 of them

are one-teacher schools; 2,000 are maintained less than five months of each year; and 300 for less than three months of each year. The average length of the term of the country schools is only 119 days. For the scholastic year ending August 31, 1912, there were 505,963 white children between the ages of 7 and 17 years, or of scholastic age, and only 415,633 of them enrolled in the public schools, leaving 90,330 white girls and boys of the farm who did not even enroll in the public schools. While the average daily attendance upon the country schools for white children during that year was 257,069, the average daily absence was 248,894. In other words, approximately 46 white children of every 100 in the rural districts of the State were absent every day the schools were in session. As a result of this non-attendance and irregular attendance, only 40 children of every 100 which enter the first grade ever get far enough advanced to enter the fifth grade; and fewer than 5 out of every 100 ever get far enough advanced to enter the eighth grade. In my opinion, there should be enacted by the legislature a compulsory attendance law, adapted to educational conditions and needs in Texas.

It should also be remembered that high schools in sufficient number have not yet been established in the rural districts of the State, notwithstanding the fact that 70 per cent of the total scholastic population of Texas reside on the farm. A further significant item of interest with respect to rural education is that the daily cost per child in average daily attendance at the average country school is greater than the cost per child in average daily attendance at the well-organized, adequately equipped, modern city school; and that illiteracy in the rural section of the State is greater than it is among the urban population. It is therefore evident that the country schools of Texas are not rendering to the people of the State that vitalizing, effective, and positive service which must be rendered if the country children are to acquire a common school education, and are to be prepared in the country schools for the responsibilities of life and for admission to institutions of higher learning. The people of the rural districts of Texas have manifested in recent years a positive desire and a laudable ambition for the improvement of the country schools; and phenomenal progress has been made in levying local taxes, in erecting better schoolhouses, and in educational legislation.

The Department of Extension of the University of Texas,

through its Division of Public School Improvement, is now making a scientific study of the public school system of the State. In this study, the results of which will be published in bulletin form for distribution throughout the State, an educational survey has been made of each of five typical counties of Texas. Every important factor which tends to contribute to, or to hinder, the establishment and maintenance of good schools has been taken into consideration in making these surveys; and it is believed that this work, when completed, will represent the most exhaustive scientific study that has ever been made of rural education in Texas, and will furnish reliable information to school trustees, county boards of education, and county superintendents for their guidance.

There are certain recognized fundamental defects, however, in both the organization and the administration of the country schools which must be corrected before they can be made efficient in accomplishing the education of the farmers' children. In the redirection of rural education in Texas the following are necessary:

1. Thoroughgoing, non-political, professional supervision must be provided for the rural schools of every county of the State. The schools for the farmers' children are entitled to the benefit of the very best educational talent, both in teachers and in superintendents, and this cannot be provided without first completely divorcing the superintendency of the schools from partisan and factional politics of the county and the State.

2. The rural high-school law, which was enacted by the Thirty-second Legislature, is a step in the direction of establishing high schools where conditions are already favorable, of consolidating small, weak school districts where practicable, and thereby establishing high-schools, and of effecting a more rational organization of the primary and the intermediate schools of the rural districts. According to the testimony of county superintendents, county boards of education, and others with first-hand information, more progress in improving the organization and work of the country schools has been made within the last two years under the rural high-school law than was ever made within any ten years during the State's entire history. When the next Legislature convenes this law will have been in effect four years; and at that time it should be amended and perfected so as to give Texas an ideal law for the development

of her country schools and the enrichment of country life. Agriculture, domestic economy, and manual training can and should be taught in all rural high schools; and in some instances it is practicable to teach one or more of these subjects in the intermediate schools, and even in the primary schools. The schools of the people must be correlated with the social, the economic, and the industrial life of the people.

3. The unreasonable and indefensible Constitution inhibition which forbids the people of school districts to levy and collect a local school tax exceeding 50 cents on the $100 worth of their own property, for the education of their own children in their own schools, will not be tolerated much longer by patriotic Texans. There is hardly a county in the State in which there are not from five to twenty or more schools whose improvement is retarded because of this Constitutional inhibition. From all over the State there arises a positive demand for relief; and when the Legislature at its next regular session submits a constitutional amendment giving relief on this point, it should also provide in the same amendment for relief from the two-thirds majority requirement in the levy of local school taxes for maintenance in the cities of the State, and for the levy of a county tax for school purposes when authorized by the people.

4. The State ad valorem school tax should be put at 20 cents on the $100 valuation of property, and should be permitted to remain at that point without change. The State's support of public education is an investment for the protection of property, for the enrichment of human life, and for its own preservation and perpetuation; and no substitute for such investment can be found.

5. Compulsory attendance upon schools has proved advantageous and helpful in other states of the American Union, and in other nations of the world. It is as sound and as defensible in good morals and in good government as taxation for the support of public schools. The State should, therefore, at the next session of the Legislature, enact a compulsory attendance law, adapted to the conditions and the needs of Texas.

6. All the State institutions of higher education in Texas are making both direct and indirect contributions to the solution of country life problems, as well as meeting the other legitimate demands made upon them by the people; and such institutions should be speedily provided with adequate buildings and equipment, and with sufficient main-

tenance funds, by millage tax, to enable them, in harmony with sound business principles, to serve the people of the whole State in the largest and most helpful way.

CONCLUSION

The problems as stated deal with every phase of the rural situation in Texas, and should appeal with tremendous force to every honest citizen who has at heart the good of his country. There is necessity for correlation and co-operation; correlation of all of the economic, the social, the religious, and the educational factors in effecting the redirection of rural education, in giving increased power and usefulness to the country church, in making the country home the living, vital institution for conserving the virtues and perpetuating the ties of the family and in giving material prosperity to the farmers; and co-operation on the part of all good people, regardless of whether they live in the city or in the country, or whether they be merchants, doctors, lawyers, preachers, teachers, farmers, or belong to any other class. The task before us is big, and the call is for big men, broad-minded, brave, and true.

"God give us men! A time like this demands
Strong minds, great hearts, true faith and ready hands.
Men whom the lust of office does not kill;
Men whom the spoils of office cannot buy;
Men who possess opinions and a will.
Men who have honor, men who will not lie.
Men who can stand before a demagogue
And damn his treacherous flatteries without winking;
Tall men, sun-crowned, who live above the fog,
In public duty and in private thinking."

20075

END OF
TITLE